



The Insider

www.senate.mi.gov/switalski

Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10

June 11, 2004

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and for giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing, while keeping true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a library near you. You can also call my office and make an appointment, or you can just walk in. See page 4 for the schedule.

Budget Update: Is the End Near???

The budget process may soon be winding down as the majority of the budget bills have either been passed by both chambers of the legislature or are about to be passed within a week, but the serious and hard-core negotiations have only just begun.

Everything done so far is the prelude to the main event, such as a light weight boxing match before the Tyson-Holyfield main event.

The gauntlet has been dropped and the political grandstanding has just begun.

A consensus is a difficult thing to accomplish, especially with a Democratic governor, a Republican-majority in both the Senate and the House, and a Democratic minority intent on making sure its budget priorities are also addressed. Within the political and ideological differences, further political cleavages occur when each legislator has certain individual biases and certain priorities that one feels must be accomplished or hell will be raised.

Finding a balance is anything but an easy task, requiring a careful blend of skillful diplomacy, creative thinking and a whole lot of will power.

Things got even more complicated as a result of the revenue estimating conference that occurred in late May. The estimates showed that Michigan's economy may be close to a turnaround, but we are not quite there and it is going to be a tough and bumpy path.

The figures that the Treasury Department, Senate Fiscal Agency and House Fiscal Agency showed mixed results. The general fund budget revenue, i.e. money that is set aside by the Legislature for discretionary spending, showed a slight improvement, resulting in a shortfall of \$250 million that will need to be addressed by the end of this fiscal year on September 30 and \$1.3 billion next year.

The School Aid Budget is money that goes to K-12 public schools. As a result of the economic downturn, sales tax revenue is down and school aid faces a shortfall of about \$50 million. Under the Michigan Constitution, this budget must be balanced at the end of the year and the option is either to give a \$30 per pupil cut to the \$6,700 foundation allowance or find another option.

I believe that it is next to impossible to cut our way out of this budget shortfall after so many years of consecutive budget cuts. The Senate Majority Leader, Ken Sikkema (R-Wyoming) had the Senate Fiscal Agency propose potential cuts in order to reach a balanced budget without any revenue enhancements. The cuts were so harsh that no one has offered to take up the proposal, not even the Senate Majority Leader who has said he was just offering this option to drive home the point. The proposed cuts would include the closure of two prisons, releasing 2,500 inmates, a 6 percent cut to revenue sharing, a 6 percent cut to higher education, a 17 percent reduction in foster care and child care funding, a further reduction in school funding and the laying off of numerous government employees including over 300 FIA employees and 150 state troopers, in addition to other items.

This proposal would effect every department and would result in severe damage to the quality of life in the state. The proposal is designed to affect everyone in state government and anyone who benefits from these services.

And the political brinkmanship bell has rung for round 1.

Governor Granholm earlier this month warned the Legislature that either the Senate pass her cigarette tax increase by June 15 so that it can take effect by July 1 or she would have no choice but to make a \$28 dollar per pupil cut to every school district.

The Senate Republicans responded by pushing an amendment, an accounting gimmick that would move about \$50.1 million in general fund money to cover the shortfall in the school aid fund.

Maintaining my core belief that K-12 education is a top priority that faced enough cuts over the past few years, I voted for the bill which passed the Senate unanimously but left me pondering from where this phantom money will come from to cover the school aid shortfall when we already face a shortfall in the general fund.

What the amendment really did was take about \$50.1 million of general fund money and transfer it to the school aid fund, which means we have make up the \$50.1 million of general fund money by either finding additional cuts or find new revenue sources.

I offered an amendment that would bring in an estimated \$9 million in lottery money for the school aid fund without raising any taxes but was defeated in the Senate. The amendment would loosen a ban against having the likeness of a sports figure to promote Michigan Lottery tickets and has raised significant money in other states. I have since introduced this amendment as a bill, Senate Bill 1290, which is in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

On top of this, all of the budget bills for next year will head to conference committee where a compromise agreement will be hammered out and then voted on by the House and the Senate. Session days will get much longer and painful decisions will have to be made. That is after all why I was elected, to make the tough decisions.

** Stay tuned for additional budget updates in future issues of the Insider e-newsletter for additional budget updates.*

Flooding Awareness Information

Many residents in Macomb County have experienced significant flooding due to the recent heavy rains that have come to the area. Even as I write this, more rain is on the horizon and no relief from Mother Nature looks to be on the forecast.

No area has been as heavily affected as some parts of Utica, where many residents were not only flooded out of their homes but also lost many of their belongings. I am working with federal, state, county and local officials in trying to find assistance for the residents and help them regain their livelihoods.

The weather affected many other people. According to the *Macomb Daily*, May 2004 was the wettest May in recorded history and led to 282 million gallons of raw sewage spilling into Lake St. Clair. There was a total of 556 million gallons of untreated overflow sewage that resulted from the rains of May 21-25. I have taken several steps to address the issue of water quality, including increasing reporting requirements. Many steps have been taken but more still needs to be done and I intend to work with my fellow legislators to address the important issue of water quality.

The Macomb County Health Department provides several tips to follow in case of a flood such as:

UTILITY SERVICE:

During and following flooding, contact utility companies for information and advice on precautions and safety measures to be taken. Do not handle any connected electrical cords or appliances if the current is still on. Do not light a flame in an enclosed area where gas fired or oil fired appliances are located before placing them back in service. If electricity is connected to an appliance which has had the motor controls submerged, do not attempt to start it until you have consulted a qualified service company.

CLEANING and DISINFECTING:

During the clean up of basements or other enclosed areas, provide as much ventilation as possible by opening windows and doors to allow moist air to flow out. Anything that has been in contact with floodwaters should be considered contaminated and must be cleaned and disinfected. All surfaces that can be washed and disinfected may be salvaged by thoroughly washing in soap and warm water, followed by disinfecting with a chlorine solution rinse made up of eight (8) tablespoons (1/2 cup) common household bleach per gallon of clean, warm water. Chlorine bleach is an effective disinfectant, but should never be mixed with ammonia since this combination produces poisonous gas.

Surfaces that are constructed in such a manner that effective decontamination and disinfection is difficult or impossible should be discarded or consult with a professional cleaning and salvaging firm.

WATER:

Water from wells located in flooded areas may be unsafe and water for drinking must be boiled for ten (10) minutes or treated by chlorine by adding one (1) teaspoon liquid laundry bleach to five gallons of water, mix well and let stand for thirty minutes before drinking.

FOOD:

Discard all items which were in direct contact with floodwaters. Jars, bottles and similar containers with crimped, or screw on caps, lids, or covers as well as cork or paraffin tops cannot be relied on to prevent product contamination.

PERSONAL HYGIENE:

Protect yourself by frequently washing your hands in warm water and in chlorinated water, particularly before eating or smoking. Use care to prevent tracking sewage contaminated floodwaters into areas that are clean. All clothing should be washed at the end of the day and a hot shower taken.

In addition, the Health Department advises residents to avoid standing water and to empty out containers that contain water to avoid mosquitoes and to ensure that children avoid playing with trash or any items that come into contact with the floodwater.

If you have any further questions or concerns, residents are urged to contact the Macomb County Health Department at (586) 469-5235 or can visit the Macomb County Health Department's Public Health website at www.macombcountymi.gov/publichealth.

Mickey's TV Insider Show

Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district.

Sterling Heights

Every Saturday and Sunday at 12:30 p.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Utica

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Clinton Township

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Roseville

Every other Tuesday at 6:05 p.m.
(Comcast Channel 18)

*Please note that Sterling Heights/Utica/Clinton Township will show the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 5 and Wide Open West Channel 10. Clinton Township will air the TV Insider Show at various times during the last week of every month. Roseville can see the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 18.

Coffee Hours

*Please note that since the District Office is in Roseville, I do not have coffee hours in Roseville. I encourage you to visit the Roseville office. We even have a coffee pot.

Clinton Twsp./Sterling Hgts./Utica

June 28
7-9 P.M.

Location: Clinton Township Public Library
(40900 Romeo Plank Road, near Canal)

Clinton Twsp./Sterling Hgts./Utica

July 19
7-9 P.M.

Location: *Clinton Township Public Library*
(35891 Gratiot, north of 15 Mile)

Contact My Office

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